



CPE REPORT

Eastern Kentucky University News for the Council on Postsecondary Education



From left: Mock Trial Team members Mackenzie DeSpain, Laura Jackson, Anthony Sean Potter, Matt Boggs, Ryan Wiggins, Allie Maples and Melissa Mahan.

MOCK TRIAL TEAM VIES FOR NATIONAL TITLE

EKU's Mock Trial Team was one of 48 teams nationally, and the only squad from a regional comprehensive institution, to participate in the American Mock Trial Association National Championship Tournament (NCT).

The Eastern team finished first at AMTA's Opening Round Championship (ORC) Series tournament in Memphis, Tennessee, March 18-20. EKU split its first-round matchup with Baylor University before sweeping ballots in the remaining three rounds against the University of Alabama, Millsaps College, and Texas A&M.

By finishing first in the 24-team tournament, EKU earned a bid to the national event in Greenville, South Carolina, April 15-17.

GAME DESIGN PROGRAM RANKS 50TH IN WORLD

EKU's game design program ranks 50th internationally, according to The Princeton Review.

The Review determined its rankings based on a survey it conducted in 2015 of 150 institutions offering game design coursework and/or degrees in the United States, Canada, and some other countries.

The company's 40-question survey asked schools to report on everything from their academic offerings and faculty credentials to their graduates' starting salaries and employment experience. Among criteria The Princeton Review weighed to make its selections: each school's academics, facilities, career services, and technology.

The high international ranking "says that we are committed to strive to keep our program and our students competitive," said Dr. George Landon, director of the EKU Gaming Institute. "We are serious about game design and how EKU fits into the bigger picture."

PROFESSOR'S STUDY EYES ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF RED RIVER GORGE, REGION

When he visits Kentucky's Red River Gorge, Dr. James Maples commonly sees license plates from across the U.S. and Canada and meets rock climbers from around the world.

Besides enjoying the scenic views and world-class rock climbing opportunities, approximately 7,500 climbers spend approximately \$3.6 million annually in the region, the gift that Maples said keeps giving.

The EKU faculty member recently completed a Red River Gorge economic impact study, surveying more than 700 climbers. The study determined that rock climbing contributed to 39 full-time jobs in the surrounding six-county region and more than \$700,000 in wages.

"I would expect climbers also create even more part-time or seasonal jobs, as well as entrepreneurial or self-employed work, which are not included in the 39-job estimate," Maples said. "All the while, climbers also generate tax dollars at the local, state and federal level. I envision this as a predictable and renewable economic resource that can generate economic growth and jobs in our service region."

Maples, an assistant professor of sociology, has presented the results of his initial study to residents of Powell, Wolfe and Lee counties, regional tourism officials, business leaders and other community partners and stakeholders. He's working with two groups in Powell County to examine how they can create social change through bike trail development and a farmer's market and with Seth Wheat of the Kentucky Office of Adventure Tourism and the Forest Service to see the study put to use in policy design.

Of the six counties (Powell, Wolfe, Lee, Estill, Menifee and Owsley) that form the basis of the study, four are among the 100 poorest in the nation. "As such, we need to find ways we can create economic activity without requiring lots of change or government economic investment," Maples said.



Lilley Cornett Woods Research and Learning Center (right) and bunkhouse.

LILLEY CORNETT WOODS BUZZES WITH ACTIVITY

New facilities at Lilley Cornett Woods, the Commonwealth's longest-preserved old-growth forest, are poised to welcome scientific researchers and educators from across the region and country and enable "sustained, high-impact research of global significance."

A 1,700-square-foot Research and Learning Center is funded by a \$330,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, while ECU, which owns and manages the Woods, funded construction of an 800-square-foot bunkhouse to house visiting scientists.

Less than 1 percent of all forested areas in the eastern U.S. is old growth, and the relatively high biodiversity in eastern Kentucky opens opportunities to link on-site and regional research to national and global research in such areas as climate change, carbon sequestration and cycling, and ecological system modeling, environmental adaptation in response to landscape change, and large-scale ecosystem monitoring and analysis.

Increasingly in recent years, the site has drawn researchers and educators from outside ECU, including college students from across the nation. The research center will better facilitate long-term projects that require data and samples to be processed immediately, rather than taken back to a lab elsewhere.

In the past month, the research facility has welcomed an ECU environmental land use planning class, a Kentucky Valley Educational Co-Op Teacher professional development workshop, and a meeting between a group of ECU Justice Studies graduate students and environmental organizers.

Many more ECU classes will visit in the coming months. The facility will also host students from Radford University, a Kentucky River Watershed Watch training session, an adventure art camp for children, an annual field camp and research symposium, a research intern program and even a production crew using recreational tree climbing to produce a short film about old-growth forests.

Beyond the natural sciences, faculty and students are also expected from the fields of environmental health science, sociology and history, among others. The new facility will also enable increased outreach to K-12 schools as well as the public.

During the summers of 2017-19, Lilley Cornett Woods will host a National Science Foundation-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program.

Participating students, primarily from schools with limited research opportunities, will arrive from all across the U.S. for the 10-week program and work directly with faculty mentors and collaborators, including agency professionals.

OT GRADUATE PROGRAM RANKED 37TH IN U.S.

The master's degree program in occupational therapy at ECU rates among the nation's best, according to U.S. News and World Report.

The magazine recently ranked the Eastern program as tied for 37th nationally. No other graduate OT program in Kentucky ranked in the top 50.

The ECU master's degree program in OT admits up to 80 students a year, the majority coming from central and eastern Kentucky with others coming from elsewhere in the Commonwealth or other states. Graduates are employed in a variety of healthcare facilities, school systems and community health programs, also mostly in Kentucky.

A post-professional master's degree in OT was launched at ECU in 1990; the entry-level master's program dates to 2002. To be eligible to sit for the certification exam in occupational therapy, students must first graduate from an entry-level master's or OTD program. (Eastern also offers a nationally recognized post-professional doctoral degree program in OT and, in collaboration with the University of Kentucky, a doctoral degree in rehabilitation sciences.)

U.S. News based its rankings solely on the results of peer assessment surveys sent to deans, other administrators, and/or faculty at accredited degree programs or schools. More than 160 nationally accredited graduate programs in occupational therapy were surveyed.

\$1 MILLION GIFT FOR ACADEMIC, STUDENT-FOCUSED INITIATIVES

Noting their excitement about "the energy that exists across campus," Maribeth and Louis Berman, of Louisville, have pledged \$1 million to ECU to support academic and student-focused initiatives.

A portion of the Bermans' gift will go toward a series of projects and initiatives important to them, to be chosen in collaboration with President Michael Benson and other University leaders. Inclusive in their total commitment is a twin-engine plane they recently gifted to the ECU Aviation program, as well as a commitment to support the University annual fund in coming years. The remainder will be deferred as an estate gift.

"Louis and I are excited to be involved with the transformation going on at ECU," said Maribeth Berman, a 1992 Eastern graduate. "The changes being made to facilities, housing, student union, rec center and academic and athletic facilities will all enhance the student experience at ECU. It is an exciting time to be a Colonell!"